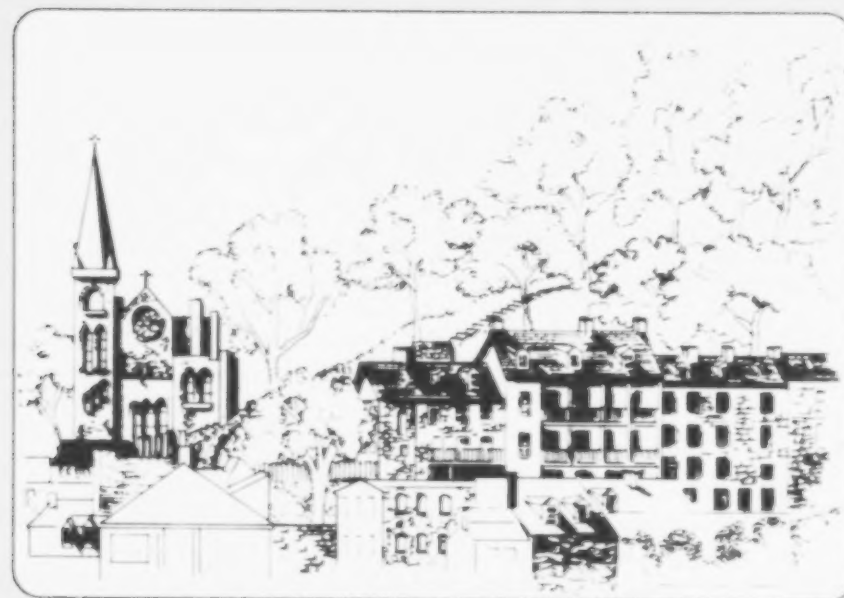


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*** HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK



special boundary study
june 1989 newsletter

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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

P.O. BOX 65

HARPERS FERRY, WV 25425

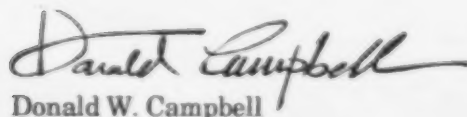


Dear Public Officials
Landowners
Civil War Enthusiasts
Tourism Officials
Park and Rural Landscape Preservationists
Park Visitors
Local Residents

The National Park Service welcomes your participation in this special boundary study.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park and the lands adjacent to it are at a crossroads. One road leads to perpetuating the rural setting surrounding the park. The other road leads to urban sprawl, traffic gridlock, and the disappearance of a quality of life that people have come to enjoy at Harpers Ferry.

The future is now. Its consequences will be brought into focus by this study. The road taken will determine if the educational, recreational, inspirational, and tourism values of the park will endure into the 21st century. Change is inevitable; there remain only choices. It is anticipated that the boundary study will be completed by December of 1989.


Donald W. Campbell

Superintendent



BACKGROUND

In 1988, Congress authorized a special boundary study to address land issues brought about by increasing suburban sprawl adjacent to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The purpose of the boundary study is to analyze significant historic and scenic lands that are integral to the park and to identify methods for protecting those lands.

In February 1989 the National Park Service assigned a team of planners to begin work on the boundary study. As a first step in planning, the team held a public workshop on March 11 in Leetown, West Virginia, to gather ideas and opinions. Approximately 40 people attended the workshop, and more than 50 letters were submitted during the subsequent comment period. Public comments, which are summarized at the end of the newsletter, focused on the scope of the study and what methods should be used to protect significant lands and resources. Based on those comments, the team has identified major issues, study areas, and land protection options to be considered in the boundary study. In the coming months this information will be used to develop strategies to protect lands within the study areas. All actions will be in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act.



Downriver view from Jefferson Rock



ISSUES



Looking east from School House Ridge

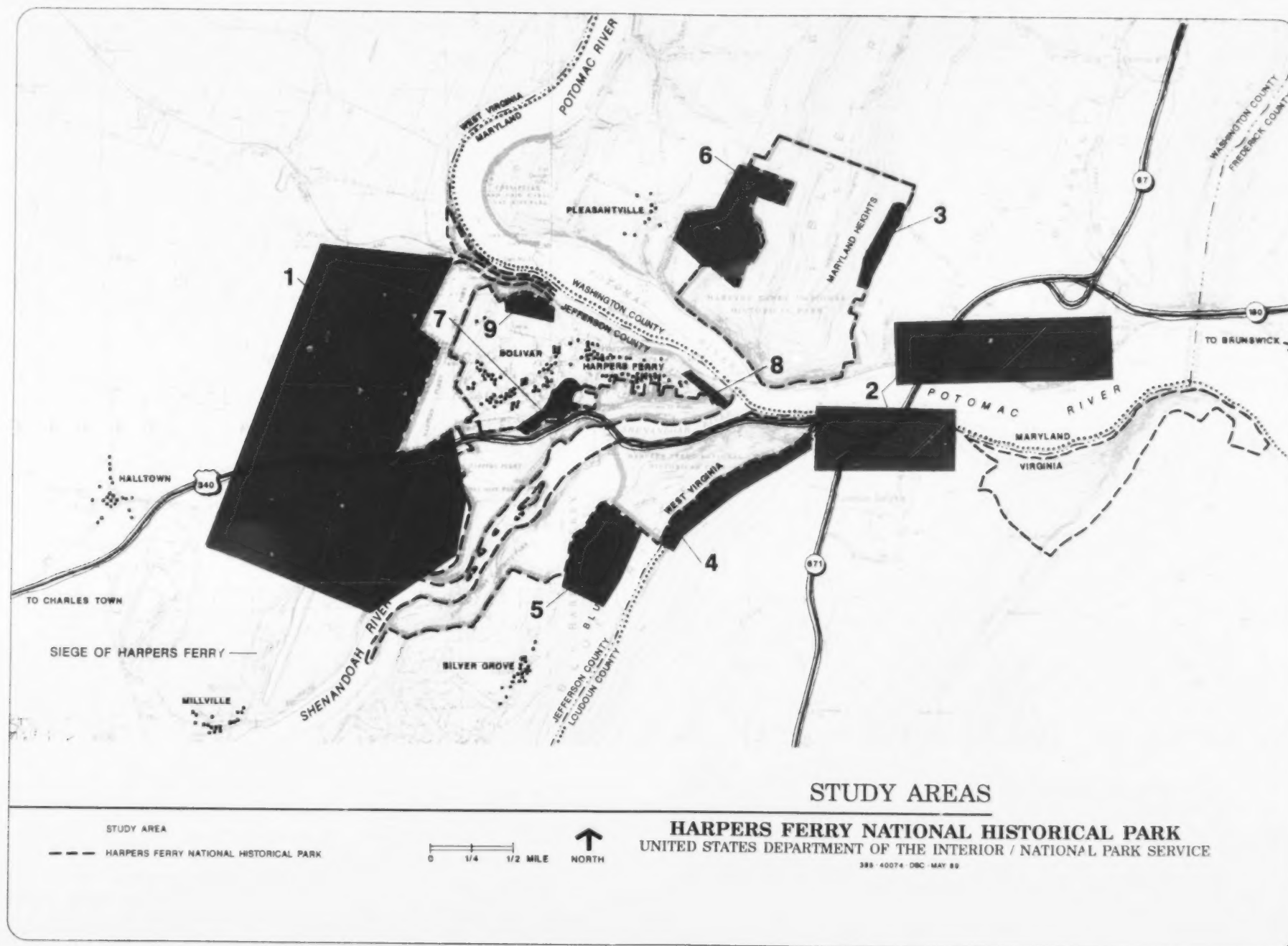
Many nationally significant historic and scenic resources that relate to Harpers Ferry's history and support its contemporary mission lie outside the park boundaries on lands experiencing the pressures of suburbanization. This unprecedented growth is bringing about rapid changes in land uses from rural agriculture to residential and commercial development and is threatening not only the resources outside the boundaries but the very values that the park was established to preserve.

When the park was created in 1944 to commemorate the historic events that occurred in and near Harpers Ferry, it was nestled in a rural river valley far from urban influences. The communities of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar were small and surrounded by a beautiful, unspoiled landscape. Since those days, the park and community have changed dramatically. Historic Civil War resources that were thought to be preserved forever on rural farmland now stand threatened by encroaching residential and commercial development on adjacent lands. The Jefferson County *Comprehensive Plan* estimates the county's population will reach 50,000 by 1998 – triple the population of the early 1950s. Park

visitation is approaching 1 million and is expected to continue to rise through the next century. Population growth and the influx of tourists have resulted in significant traffic increases. Heavy traffic on Route 340 has required a bypass, now under construction around Charles Town.

In 1988 Jefferson County officials recognized this population explosion and enacted a zoning ordinance – the first in West Virginia. The ordinance defines residential and commercial growth areas in the county, but it is economically based and fails to distinguish between the lands that were significant in Harpers Ferry's history and other lands in the county.

The national historical park is at a crossroads. The knowledge and inspiration it provides to visitors, the positive image it brings to the tri-state region, and the significant role it plays in the regional tourism economy can no longer be taken for granted. Difficult decisions about the park's future lie ahead. When the special boundary study is completed, it will help guide those decisions and shape the park as it moves into the 21st century.



1 School House Ridge battlefield: This study area lies between Bolivar Heights and School House Ridge and extends south around Bolivar Heights to include lands west of Cavalier Heights. It is the last remaining unprotected portion of the battlefield.

For the past 125 years, the School House Ridge battlefield has retained much of its Civil War appearance. However, increasing pressures from residential and commercial development – and zoning that encourages such development – now threaten the integrity of this battlefield.

- 2 Lands in the downriver viewshed from Jefferson Rock:** Lands in this study area lie in the viewshed through the Harpers Ferry water gap from Jefferson Rock. Thomas Jefferson once proclaimed this view "worth a voyage across the Atlantic." For

The Virginia portion of the study area (in Loudoun County) includes the lands between Loudoun Heights and Short Hill that can be seen from Jefferson Rock. Of particular concern is the prominent knoll known as the Hunt Club property. Its central position in the viewshed from Jefferson Rock makes it the most important unprotected property in this area. Other lands include the Potomac River shore and lands on the east and west sides of the Hunt Club property. These lands have remained the same since Thomas Jefferson proclaimed their beauty. However, increasing development in this region threatens the integrity of the Jefferson Rock viewshed.

3 Historic properties on east side of Maryland Heights: Five small parcels on Maryland Heights along the park's eastern boundary contain significant historic resources. A recent archeological study of Maryland Heights by the National Park Service has provided extensive documentation of the history of these properties and a survey of archeological resources. One of the parcels has recently been developed; the remaining four are still undeveloped.

- 4 Appalachian Trail lands on the east side of Loudoun Heights:** These lands, which now lie outside the park, contain many resources important to its history. The National Park Service completed an archeological survey of Loudoun Heights in 1988 and identified a number of historic resources in this study area. Maintenance of these historic resources is currently the responsibility of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. The park provides trail protection through a cooperative agreement.



- 5 Scenic lands along the ridgetop southwest of Loudoun Heights:** This study area includes a wooded parcel between Route 32 (Chestnut Hill Road) and the Loudoun Heights ridgetop. The southern limit is across from the Piper family cemetery. This area is important because of its unspoiled natural beauty as viewed from historic Bolivar and Cavalier Heights. Together with the park's Loudoun Heights property, this ridgetop land provides a scenic backdrop for travelers heading east on Route 340 and for visitors to the park, and it preserves the scenic qualities that local residents have enjoyed for many years.
- 6 Historic properties on the west side of Maryland Heights:** The wooded lands and open fields on Maryland Heights between Hoffmaster Road and the park's western boundary contain the historic Unseld farm and the Civil War spur battery, both significant to the Harpers Ferry story. The Unseld farm is prominent feature from Bolivar Heights and still retains its Civil War appearance. The spur battery is in excellent condition. Although these historic resources are privately protected, new residential development in the area could diminish their integrity and have a dramatic impact on the historic and scenic viewshed from Bolivar and Cavalier Heights.
- 7 Wooded, undeveloped lands above St. Peters Roman Catholic Cemetery in Bolivar:** These lands contain some of the last remaining wooded and undeveloped lots in Harpers Ferry and Bolivar. This area of green space screens many existing developments and helps maintain the scenic and historic integrity of the park and towns. Modern residential development in this area would further degrade the scenic and rural qualities that visitors and local residents enjoy.
- 8 U.S. Armory Grounds:** The U.S. Armory grounds, site of a once-thriving gun manufacturing industry, lie outside the park boundary along the banks of the Potomac River near its confluence with the Shenandoah River. The foundations of buildings are the only remaining evidence of this federal industry



at Harpers Ferry. These lands contain the most significant unprotected historic resources in the town of Harpers Ferry.

- 9 Historic properties on the north end of Bolivar Heights:** This study area is integral to the Civil War story at Harpers Ferry. Because of its commanding view of the Potomac River, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and the Harpers Ferry-Sharpsburg Road, both Union and Confederate forces used this land for defensive purposes. In 1861 it was used as an encampment and drill ground for Confederate troops under the command of Colonel Thomas J. Jackson. In 1864, Union General Philip Sheridan ordered the construction of earthworks and artillery redoubts on Bolivar Heights. One of these earthworks remains today as a silent reminder of the Civil War at Harpers Ferry.



LAND PROTECTION METHODS



The legislation that authorized the Harpers Ferry special boundary study recommended the use of both nonfederal and federal methods to protect nationally significant historic and scenic lands in and near Harpers Ferry. A wide variety of protection methods will be considered in this study, including the following:

Nonfederal Methods

- purchase by land trusts and private not-for-profit organizations
- zoning to protect from incompatible development
- tax incentives for landowners
- private ownership protection

Federal Methods

- scenic or agricultural easements (the federal government acquires specified rights to the land, but the land remains in private ownership)
- purchase by the federal government and sell back to the private individual with restrictions attached to the deed
- lease of land to the federal government (the land remains in private ownership)
- lease back (the federal government acquires the land and leases it to the private individual)
- cooperative agreements with landowners
- fee acquisition of the land for inclusion within the park

COMMENTS FROM THE PRESS

A public workshop was held on March 11, 1989, to begin the planning process. Following an introduction by Superintendent Campbell and a slide presentation on the two initial study areas, the 40+ participants separated into six work groups to discuss issues and concerns relating to land areas adjacent to the park. The discussions focused on the School House Ridge battlefield area and the downriver viewshed from Jefferson Rock, but other areas deserving study were identified during the workshop and in subsequent letters. Each work group prepared a list of concerns, which were then presented to all participants. Comments and concerns generally fell into three broad categories.

Protection

Protection of the historical and scenic qualities of the study areas was seen as a positive action. Comments included the following:

- Zoning can protect but it is not permanent.
- Consider cooperative agreements.
- Easements are not usually enforced.
- Existing owners should be protected (i.e., lifetime tenancy).
- The study areas are worth saving.
- Deal with the old orchard site immediately.
- Encourage new zoning categories to protect the land.
- Consider lease purchase.
- Consider fee purchase.
- Consider controlled development (deed covenants).
- Consider buffer zones.
- Consider scenic easements.
- Begin the application process for landmark status.
- Local organizations should advocate preservation.
- National support is needed.

Funding

The cost of implementing protection methods was considered critical to proposals. The following funding options were mentioned:

- Use private conservancies, gifts, or revolving funds to finance protection efforts.
- Establish land trust funds.
- Use federal funds.
- Use private preservation association funds.

Land Use

Many participants felt that even if protection options are funded and implemented, the question of how best to use the land must be addressed. Land use options and comments by the groups included the following:

- Additional visitor experiences could result in longer stays and economic benefit to the community.
- Consider consolidating development in areas away from views.
- Consider higher density development.
- Consider recreational resource values as they relate to residential development.
- The decision between tourism or development/suburbia must be made.
- Downriver views are important.
- There should be no more buildings on School House Ridge.
- Avoid overdevelopment of park land.
- The view of the historic scene is important.
- Preserve the view from Bolivar Heights.
- Consider tour roads, paths, guides, Civil War enactments, and broadening the historic theme.



SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

- Consider the quarry site for recreation.
- Allow the continued use of land for farming.
- Preserve the Murphy farm.
- Consider the use of a computer to analyze limited/ controlled development acceptability.

WRITTEN COMMENTS FOLLOWING THE WORKSHOP

More than 50 letters were received, which included the following comments:

- Purchase School House Ridge and the Chambers farm.
- Preserve all historically important lands in Harpers Ferry.
- Take whatever steps deemed necessary to protect School House Ridge and the Chambers farm.
- Preserve School House Ridge and the Chambers farm.
- Stop development on School House Ridge and the Chambers farm.
- Preserve the land.
- Expand the boundary study to include other important areas such as the spur battery on Maryland Heights, the Hunt Club in Virginia, lands adjacent to the park's new entrance, and the Appalachian Trail property on Loudoun Heights.
- Save all historical areas.
- Stop development until the study has been completed.
- Keep us informed of the study.
- Support comprehensive study.
- Protect School House Ridge through conservation easements, appropriate zoning, and enforcement of regulations to avoid federal acquisition.



FUTURE ACTION



The next step in planning for the boundary study is to evaluate the importance of the study areas and suggest alternatives for their protection. We hope to complete this work and have a draft document ready for review by the fall of this year. As the study progresses, we will keep you informed through press releases and public meetings and will provide opportunities for you to comment.

Following is a schedule of study tasks:

Task	Estimated Completion Date
Draft study to public	October 1989
Public workshop	October 1989
Close of comments on draft study	November 1989
Final study to public	January 1990

We plan to meet with individual landowners in the study areas this summer to review the study and discuss protection options. Meetings can be arranged by contacting park resource management specialist Bill Hebb at (304) 535-6371, ext. 6338. A park representative will meet privately with you.

Thank you for your interest in this project. Your continued involvement in the study effort is important to its success. If you have any additional comments, please send them to

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
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